

District 25 News

MAKIKI, TANTALUS, MCCULLY, PAPA KOLEA

APRIL 2007



Dear Neighbors,

It continues to be a privilege to represent you in the State Legislature. My first session has been a tremendous learning experience.

As the Legislature completes its final conference meetings and wraps up its last days, attention will turn to possible vetoes by the Governor and the opportunity for the Legislature to override those vetoes.

Several bills have already been signed into law by the Governor. Notably, these include a bill that makes permanent the power of condominium associations to assess delinquent maintenance fees against a person who buys the unit through a foreclosure proceeding and a bill that requires vehicle safety inspections to be completed annually, without regard to when the vehicle's registration is issued.

Bills still pending that will be considered in the final days of the legislature include bills on health insurance rate regulation, children's health care insurance, affordable housing, pedestrian safety, graffiti, animal cruelty, and campaign finance reforms.

During the interim between sessions, my office and I are open to you. Please contact me if you have any questions, concerns, ideas for legislation, or any suggestions on how we can improve our community. I can be reached at 586-9425 or at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.

Mahalo,

DELLA AU BELATTI

State Representative, District 25



Rep. Belatti with Hawaii Supreme Court Justice William S. Richardson at Capitol to honor UH Environmental Law Program.



Makiki resident Barbara Luksch with Rep. Belatti at the State Capitol (See story on p.4)

Inside this issue:

Successful Graffiti Cleanup 2

Graffiti Legislation Update 3

Keiki Healthcare Update 4

Makiki Residents Honored at the Legislature 4

Do Your Kids Qualify for Free Health Insurance? 5

Elections by National Popular Vote 6

New School Moving into Makiki 7

Got E-MAIL?

Because of budgetary constraints, I am unable to mail newsletters to every resident in the District. One way to reduce costs is to email newsletters.

If you would like to receive this newsletter by email, please let us know by sending an email to:

repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.



Residents & Hui O Makiki Clean Up Makiki District Park

On Saturday March 31st, over 20 community volunteers met at Makiki District Park to take part in a community cleanup to remove unsightly graffiti from the walls of the newly renovated park buildings. The graffiti was especially extensive on the library building with much of the lower walls on both sides of the building vandalized. Because this building is currently under the jurisdiction of the City's Department of Design and Construction, special permission was needed to access the vandalized areas.

Much progress was made during the cleanup, which lasted from 8 am to noon. Volunteers worked hard picking up trash, painting over graffiti, and removing postal tags that were stuck on various areas of the park. Volunteers also painted over graffiti at nearby Bus Stop shelters and attempted to clean the new playground equipment.

A good time was had by all as the cleanup served not only as an opportunity to help keep the commu-

nity clean, but as a means to discuss community related issues with new friends. Food, drink, networking and conversation followed the cleanup.

A warm mahalo is extended to all of our hard working volunteers and our helpful contacts from the City's Department of Parks and Recreation, Transit Services, and Department of Design and Construction, as well as Hui O Makiki and TEK Pacific Inc. who was especially helpful with their donation of 15 gallons of paint used to cover the graffiti.

In addition to our work that has been keeping the facility clean, the City has recently been able to secure funding that will allow the renovation of the library to be completed. The Department of Design and Construction is currently working on issuing directives and remobilizing the contractor.

Organizers of this cleanup recognize that addressing the graffiti problem is an ongoing process that requires continued community vigilance and solu-



Rep. Belatti covers the last of the graffiti on this wall

tions that address the underlying causes of vandalism. My office and community groups will continue to explore such solutions, and plans are currently in the works that will allow a community group to adopt the Makiki District Park.

If you, or a group in which you are a member, are interested in ongoing efforts at the Park, please contact my office at 586-9425 or at

repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.



Della's husband Mike works on the other side of the Library

Current Status of Graffiti Legislation

In our last newsletter, the Legislature was considering a number of bills that imposed penalties of community service on those convicted of graffiti damage. These bills have since been amended to incorporate provisions that make it easier for persons to be charged and convicted of *aggravated* criminal property damage depending on the number of times they are convicted of criminal property damage in the 3rd and 4th degrees.

The Legislature has now reached the "conference" stage where the House and Senate are debating and working out the contents of the surviving bills. The bills have been amended and now stand as follows:

Relating to Graffiti (SB 228, SD 1, HD 1)

- Requires persons convicted of causing graffiti damage to perform community service repairing the graffiti damage which they committed or spending a proportional time repairing other graffiti damage.
- Establishes a judiciary "graffiti eradication sentencing program" to coordinate the community service program.
- Makes persons who are convicted of causing criminal property damage two or more times guilty of aggravated criminal property damage regardless of the time period between the convictions.

Relating to Graffiti (HB 451, HD 1, SD 1)

- Requires a minor convicted of causing graffiti damage, their parents, or their guardians to repair the damage and pay for the cost of paint and materials within 60 days of a court order.
- Requires the convicted minor to spend a minimum of 80 hours repairing graffiti damage at other properties.
- Reduces the number of criminal property damage convictions in the preceding 5 years necessary to charge a person with aggravated criminal property damage from two to one.
- Requires persons convicted of causing aggravated property damage to perform 80 hours of community service repairing graffiti damage for a first conviction, and 160 hours of community service repairing graffiti damage for any subsequent conviction.



Children's Healthcare Advances at the Legislature

The Hawaii Uninsured Project estimates that there are about 5,000 children who fall into a gap group

whose parents earn too much to qualify for state or federally funded health insurance programs, but still cannot afford any other form of health insurance.

Legislation to ensure health care insurance for this gap group has advanced this session. Two bills are now under consideration (HB 1008 and SB1918) and would provide insurance for families whose income is at or below 300% of the federal poverty level for Hawaii. The bills' major provisions are as follows:

- Uninsured infants up to 30 days of age would be provided health care assistance of up to

\$10,000 per child.

- A partnership between the department of human services and managed care plans would be created to provide health care coverage to uninsured persons less than nineteen years of age who have been uninsured for a continuous period of at least six months.
- By expanding QUEST-Net (a state funded program administered by managed care plans), medical assistance would be provided free of charge to all uninsured persons less than 19 years of age whose family income is 300% or less of the federal poverty level for Hawaii (and subject to other restrictions).
- This program is proposed as a pilot project, with its cost and effectiveness to be reviewed after three years.

Hawaii Covering Kids and Makiki Resident Honored by Legislature



Representatives Della Au Belatti and Joshua Green share smiles with honorees Barbara Luksch, Hawaii Covering Kids Project Director, and Hawaii Primary Care Association CEO Beth Giesting.

On April 2, 2007, the State House of Representatives honored the accomplishments of "Hawaii Covering Kids" with a special presentation on the House Floor. Established in 1999 by the Hawaii Primary Care Association, Hawaii Covering Kids helps eligible uninsured children obtain free and low-cost health insurance coverage under the QUEST and Medicaid programs.

Approximately 16,000 children in Hawaii do not have health care insurance. Hawaii Covering Kids, along with its partners, have helped to reduce the average annual number of uninsured newborns, children and youth by more than 20%.

Hawaii Covering Kids' activities include pharmacy outreach, application assistance, and publication of informational flyers in 19 languages.

In addition to honoring Hawaii Covering Kids, the State House recognized Barbara Luksch, project director for Hawaii Covering Kids and an 8 year resident of Makiki, and Beth Giesting, CEO of Hawaii Primary Care Association. Barbara and Hawaii Covering Kids currently reaches out to low and middle income families whose children may be eligible for free or low cost medical care under the QUEST and Medicaid programs.

Due to a recent expansion of QUEST and Medicaid income limits, Barbara explains that now a family of four earning up to \$71,280 annually may qualify for low-cost health coverage for their children. "We owe it to every child who is eligible for public health insurance to get them enrolled," says Barbara.

Giesting, Hawaii Covering Kids, and their many community partners. We thank you for your tireless effort to bring healthcare to all keiki in Hawaii.

More Information about Hawaii Covering Kids and application forms for QUEST and Medicaid are available at www.coveringkids.com.

Congratulations again to Barbara Luksch, Beth

FREE

Health Insurance for Kids

(QUEST or Medicaid)

Why is health insurance important?

- ✎ Children with health insurance can get regular health care.
- ✎ Regular health care helps children be healthier and less likely to miss school and other activities.
- ✎ Regular health care helps avoid unnecessary emergency room visits.

Can you answer **YES** to this information about your child?

- ✎ 0 to 19 Years Old
- ✎ Hawai'i Resident
- ✎ U.S. Citizen or Legal Immigrant
- ✎ Meets Family Income Limits

QUEST and Medicaid for Kids
Family Income Limits

	Free Health Insurance	Low-Cost Health Insurance
Household Size	Gross Monthly Income	Gross Monthly Income
1	\$ 2,450	\$ 2,940
2	\$ 3,282	\$ 3,939
3	\$ 4,115	\$ 4,938
4	\$ 4,950	\$ 5,940
5	\$ 5,782	\$ 6,939
6	\$ 6,615	\$ 7,938
7	\$ 7,450	\$ 8,940
8	\$ 8,282	\$ 9,939
Each Additional Person	\$ 835	\$ 1,002

(Revised 1 February 2007)

Call for an application or more information!

211 *free call* from all islands

02/07

information
provided by

Hawai'i Covering Kids
Advocating Health Insurance for All Keiki and 'Ōpio



www.coveringkids.com

English

National Popular Vote: A Proposal that Needs More Local Public Debate

Representative Della Au Belatti

On April 5, 2007, the Hawaii State House voted in favor (35-12) of Senate Bill 1956 that proposes a process of electing the President and Vice President by a national popular vote. According to the bill, Hawaii will enter into an interstate compact that commits our four presidential electors to vote for the candidate who wins the most votes nationwide.

Under the current Electoral College system that elects our President and Vice President, each state is allocated electors equal to the combined number of its representatives and senators in the United States Congress. Each state can determine how it selects its electors, but currently all states use the popular vote on Election Day to elect electors. Although ballots list the names of presidential candidates, voters are actually choosing electors from their state. Following the general election results, presidential electors cast their official electoral votes for the offices of President and Vice President.

In the history of the United States, there have been four times when the winner of the national popular vote was not the winner of the electoral vote. This includes the 2000 election of George W. Bush over Al Gore where Gore won more popular votes than Bush, but Bush won the presidency with 271 electoral votes to Gore's 266 electoral votes.

For decades, various groups have lobbied unsuccessfully for a constitutional amendment to change the Electoral College system. In 2006, National Popular Vote, a California-based group, was formed to advocate for the creation of "interstate compacts" or contracts between states that would bind them to commit their presidential electors to vote for the candidate who wins the most national votes, even if the candidate loses in that state.

Although I agree wholeheartedly with the slogan of "one person, one vote," I voted against this measure for two reasons. First, I feel there needs to be more local debate about whether this is a good measure. There has been national debate about changing the Electoral College for over 30 years, with little success for a direct amendment to the Constitution.

This may be for good reasons that we, as a State, should consider. Some argue that, except for the four instances where the winner of the presidential election was not the winner of the popular vote, in the remaining elections, the Electoral College in most cases simply amplifies the popular vote.

"In principle, I agree with the idea of a national popular vote for the presidential election. But as we all know, the devil is in the details with any piece of legislation. . . .

If Hawaii were to vote 70% to 30% in favor of Barack Obama in 2008, but Mitt Romney, were to win 55% of the national vote, our electors would have to vote for Romney. How does this outcome represent the will of the people of this great State?

I think the better course for this matter is to have greater discussion within our communities and revisit this bill at another time."

*- Rep. Belatti's Floor Remarks on
National Popular Vote Legislation*

President John F. Kennedy stated his support for the Electoral College System as follows: "It is not only the unit vote for the presidency we are talking about, but a whole solar system of governmental power. If it is proposed to change the balance of power of one of the elements . . . it is necessary to consider the others." I believe it would be wiser for us as a community to heed these words, and take the time to consider more thoroughly this proposal that dismantles the way presidential elections have been conducted for years and which, for the most part, have reflected the popular vote nationwide.

Second, I voted against Senate Bill 1956 because under this measure our electoral votes could be cast for the person who did not win the majority of votes in our state. This outcome would contradict the desires and votes of the majority of our citizens.

On April 23, 2007, Governor Linda Lingle vetoed this measure and similarly explained "[g]iven the potential under the interstate compact that Hawaii's electoral votes would be awarded in a manner that may not reflect the will of the majority of the voters in Hawaii, I believe that this bill is not in the best interest of the citizens of the State of Hawaii." The Legislature has until May 3, 2007 to override the Governor's veto.

Makiki Welcomes Charter School

Hālau Kū Māna

Hālau Kū Māna, a cultural, community, and environmentally based public charter school plans to move into its new home in Makiki Valley in June of this year. Keola Nakanishi, Principal and Director of Hālau Kū Māna, said the school has recently acquired a 30-year lease in Makiki Valley with the help of the state, but acquiring additional funding for the relocation along with strict time constraints and the task of building and running a school simultaneously has kept administrators busy.

The school, which serves grades 6 through 12, has less than 50 business days left on its lease at its current home in Manoa Valley.

"Hālau Kū Māna's vision is to facilitate individual and community healing and empowerment by fostering lifelong learners who think, feel, and act in ways that are pono; for recognizing strengths and addressing challenges as they seek positive, systemic change in their local, regional, and global communities."

Hālau Kū Māna has thus far been able to secure \$800,000 through a combination of donations, fundraising, and grants. The school is still seeking to raise an additional \$200,000 that is needed to help get the school up and running. More pressing than securing the additional funding, however, is the need to complete the school's infrastructure in a timely manner.

The school is already slated to share space with the Hawaii Nature Center. However, planning, permitting, land clearing, structure building and the installation of plumbing and electrical infrastructure still needs to be completed. Although volunteers have offered their time over the past few months to clear land that will be used by the school, there is still much work to be done.

Hālau Kū Māna, which has the distinction of being Oahu's first charter school, has sought a permanent campus since its founding in 2001.



Long-term relocation to Makiki is an exciting possibility for the students and administrators at the school, especially since it is so close to its host communities of Papakolea and Maunaloa Valley.

Though there are currently 92 students enrolled at Hālau Kū Māna, the charter school's waiting list usually exceeds its enrollment. Even so, Nakanishi notes that there are student openings for next year, especially for grades 6 and 9.

Hālau Kū Māna would appreciate any help the community can give in the form of donations or volunteer service. The school has produced a 150 minute, 2 disc, CD set featuring a collaboration of over 200 student, backyard, and professional artists, including John and Guy Cruz, Jack Johnson and Paula Fuga, artists from Natural Vibrations, Oohla the Moc, and much more. All of the proceeds from CD sales will benefit Hālau Kū Māna and its larger 12 school alliance. Visit www.halaukumana.org or call 988-8995 for details about how you can purchase a CD, make a donation, or volunteer at the school.

For those interested in charter schools, one bill relating to governance of charter schools has survived the legislative process. Senate Bill 603 seeks to improve public education as delivered through the charter school system by clarifying the functions, duties, and roles of the Board of Education and Charter School Review Panel in the administration and operations of Hawaii's charter schools. SB 603 is currently being worked through in Conference Committee.

For more information about Hālau Kū Māna, visit their website at www.halaukumana.org.

